

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 006562

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ AND MIDDLE EAST

Summary

-- Lead stories in all papers today, October 14, focus on King Abdullah's visit to Singapore to attend the Asian Economic Summit, and highlight a number of domestic activities, including the Jordanian Economic Forum. Front-page reports in all papers continue to highlight developments on the Iraqi front as well as the Palestinian-Israeli front, particularly focusing on the Israeli "massacre" in Rafah. Over the weekend, papers highlighted the October 10 meeting that took place between Israelis and Palestinians at the Dead Sea to talk about peace process issues.

Editorial Commentary

-- "Jordan and Iraq: two aspects to their relationship"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (10/14): "Jordan's relationship with Iraq, under the foreign occupation, has two aspects. The first is a political aspect. This is represented by the fact that Jordan does not recognize the governing council in Baghdad but nevertheless deals with it, which is not only a Jordanian approach, but also one that is endorsed by the Arab League, the U.N. General Assembly and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Yet, Jordan alone opposes Ahmad Chalabi, who is considered Washington's ally in the governing council. It is also represented by the fact that Jordan opposes a federation in Iraq, as proposed by America and the governing council. Jordan also opposes sending Turkish, Syrian, Iranian, Saudi or Jordanian troops to Iraq, on the principle that it does not serve Iraq and the Iraqis. In addition, Jordan wants a speedy transfer of authority to the Iraqis.. The second aspect of the relationship with Iraq under occupation is one that raises much unspoken controversy among Jordanians, such as the training of thousands of Iraqi policemen or helping in the rebuilding of some civil institutions there. There are those who believe that Jordan is 'hasty' in undertaking these steps, and that patience is in order until the volatile events in Iraq are resolved, and yet, there is no real Jordanian popular opposition to these steps. Some compare Jordan's relationship with Iraq (under occupation) with its relationship with the West Bank and Gaza (under occupation), in terms of contributing to the people's steadfastness and maintaining nationalism."

-- "Running from Iraq"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (10/14): "The U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld yesterday gave up the task of reconstructing Iraq and said that it is an issue left for the Iraqis to decide. As for the U.S. Secretary of State, he has been working hard to transfer the security task in Iraq to the United Nations and to Arab and international peacekeeping forces. America's objective is no longer to bring good things but to ease losses, and all this is due to the resistance, which has just started. The U.S. administration presented the aggression against Iraq as part of the war on international terrorism. The result was the destruction of a stable country that did not exercise terrorism and did not have relations with terrorist organizations, and turning it into an open arena for terrorist organization. In other words, America waged war to get the terrorists out of Afghanistan and then waged another war to find a new location for them in Iraq. Where is the Iraqi democracy that America claimed would be a model to be followed for the entire region? Where is the reconstruction that American companies thought would be an easy task? Where is the security and stability in the region that America

claimed Iraq impedes? What happened to the peace process in Palestine that Iraq was supposedly hindering? The American project in Iraq is completely bankrupt. The question is whether America will run backward or forward."

-- "The Palestinian-Israeli dialogue in Jordan"

Daily columnist Sultan Hattab writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (10/14): "The Dead Sea meeting is important because the interlocutors were either in official positions, like some of the Palestinian delegates, or were very close to the Israeli decision-making levels, or even from the heart of the Israeli political parties.. The content of the document is a step forward in this grim reality where Sharon continuously forfeits his responsibilities by continuing the aggression. The U.S. administration, which is in alliance with the Israeli right-wing and performs the Israeli role more than the Israelis themselves, should stop a little to see that there are Israeli and Palestinian parties who are still gripping the thread of hope leading to dialogue and agreement. If the U.S. administration and the Arabs would support this effort to make of it a solid mutual initiative, then there might be a way to work forward, instead of this complete loss in the roadmap, which has already been uprooted and deformed by Sharon."

-- "The hour of truth: no hope for peace"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (10/13): "The decision to send Turkish forces to Iraq and the escalation of the Israeli-American military and political intervention policy in Syria and Lebanon are indications for the serious potential for wars and confrontations to spread. Since no one cares anymore about the fate of the roadmap of the Palestinian cause, the language that prevails now is that of threats and military campaigns, as we see in Iraq and in the West Bank and Gaza. These are campaigns where citizens pay a huge price, where houses are broken into, where women and children are made scared and where men are arrested because they reject the foreign occupation. This is the current image of the east part of the Arab world following the fall of Baghdad and following this entrenched alliance between the U.S. president and the Israeli Prime Minister. With this image, the Dead Sea meeting between Israelis and Palestinians seems to be out of context and a weak lost voice among the thundering noise of Israeli tanks in Rafah and Jenin.. In short, this region, which has been drowned with the idea of the need to get rid of the Iraqi dictator on the pretext of establishing security and stability, is now facing the hour of truth, namely that security, stability and peace are lost now because the Arab land has turned into arenas for the invading Americans, British and Israelis and because colonialist schemes have been revitalized once more."

HALE